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New legislation that would make it easier to deport illegal residents with gang ties is being proposed by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park.

Citing Illinois' high street gang population, Kirk said Monday he wants law enforcement nationwide to take a tougher stance against illegal aliens who are members of gangs. Locally, the legislation would combine with efforts already being taken in Lake County to deport illegals in the criminal system.

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"While most gang members are American citizens, we are seeing the rise of transnational drug gangs that are bringing new levels of violence and criminal activity to our communities," Kirk said at a Chicago news conference attended by various community leaders, including Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran.

Kirk proposed the Alien Gang Removal Act, which would amend federal immigration law to include membership in a street gang as a disqualifying criterion for entry into the United States. The legislation also creates new grounds for deportation after a member of an officially designated criminal gang is found to have been convicted of any felonies or criminal misdemeanors involving weapons, ammunition, child pornography or illegal narcotics.

In proposing the Act, Kirk cited statistics from the Government Accountability Office, which state that illegal aliens in prisons have been arrested an average of eight times each.

"The national statistics on repeat offenders are staggering, and these gangs are backed by weapons and resources that can easily overwhelm suburban law enforcement," Kirk said.

In Lake County, Curran has already begun programs that accelerate the deportation process for illegal aliens housed in the Lake County Jail who are convicted of crimes. Curran said he hopes Kirk's proposal will eventually be enforced nationwide.

"I'm glad he's addressing it," Kirk said. "The bottom line is, these issues have to be addressed. I'm getting really frustrated with people telling law enforcement not to do its job across this country."